

**The Cultural Collaborative:
A Community Plan for San Antonio's Creative Economy**

**TCC Community Forum
City Council Districts 1-2
June 7, 2004, 5:30-7:30 PM
San Antonio Central Library**

Discussion Notes

I. Opening Remarks

Opening remarks were given by Felix Padrón, Executive Director of the San Antonio Office of Cultural Affairs. TCC strategies will be presented at the October 18 Town Hall Meeting. The plan will be presented to City Council in January 2005. Several Executive and Steering Committee members and CAB members were recognized at the meeting. Padrón presented an overview of the planning process, including interviews, focus groups, and community forums.

Jerry Allen, principal of Jerry Allen & Associates presented an overview of the TCC process, indicating that his job is to listen carefully to the community. TCC has eight focus areas:

- Arts and culture in education
- Cultural infrastructure/ecosystem
- Civic aesthetics/public art
- Creative individuals
- Resources
- Neighborhood revitalization
- Tourism
- Advocacy and outreach

Allen asked the audience to talk about needs and/or issues, opportunities, and short- and long-term goals for San Antonio's cultural community. "Imagine how San Antonio might be different in 5 years," Allen said.

II. Participant Comments

The following comments are from the consulting team's notes, which were taken by hand and with a laptop computer. The forum was not recorded.

Commenting on The Finding Ways Conference, which was opened by the Mayor and Judge Wolff, who didn't stay for the rest of the event, nor did other elected leaders. Noted the large amount of artists and organizations present and the need to fund the arts more generously to make San Antonio more livable.

A local writer and artist created Inter-American Book Fair, was originally granted to an individual, small creative business- collaborative, brings 800 writers to SA, Latino Letters-in order to do anything for the City, has had Literary tour of San Antonio idea, but no money available to do this, could be another venue to get people here and think we are interested in literature fellowships, independent publishing grants, used to be available, need it.

Surprised at the number of city agencies that stayed at the Finding Ways Conference, and the following week she saw Mayor Garza and Judge Wolff talking up the conference and the issues.

Must tour and see the true diversity of this city. What will we do to fix this problem of peoples' attitudes toward other people--art does not display this. Disconnects are the housing summit, play art in the parks, barren land, Lincoln Park, public library-needs black art, never has it, even during black history month. Need to reach everyone and include everyone in TCC.

Need better representation and inclusion in any plan that takes place. People think native people are extinct in this area, but there is a large community of aboriginal people. They need to be included in planning and programming.

(This person is) working with children and African-American art. Need to instill the arts in children while they are young and their minds are open. Thriving cities have a vibrant art scene, i.e. New Orleans, and each individual person has a responsibility to make the community better. Business is business, and is not a novelty.

Need to tour to the Eastside and spend two hours or more there. Wants to create a tour booklet and hopes to establish bus tours of all of San Antonio so people can get to know their city. Tours that are not just for tourist. Need to keep our authenticity, which is very important. Suggested reading *Stories My Momma Told Me*, by a St. Phillips College person.

Revitalizing art spaces at the airport. Wants to see the creation of a collaborative of artists groups and orgs that have a space for artists to go to show their work. If this collaborative is established, we can address need to diversify, also to welcome new organizations, and embrace all types of art. Part of the answer is that collaboration is needed. Need actual sale of items created by artists in San Antonio. We need to sell our work and make a profit.

On the OCA's website is the tours of *Beyond the Alamo*. The tours include four different districts. Southside tour was highly erroneous.

She's new to San Antonio. There is such incredible diversity of people and arts, organizations and museums. Must find way of marketing it and developing a systematic way to share the system. There isn't a resource to find out what's available.

A participant feels that the conversation is too general and suggests the following: 1. Citywide policy effort to prevent taking down architecturally important buildings. Don't replace a ceramic studio with a carwash; 2. Everything is here, but there exists a systematic disregard about what is actually here by those in public office. Not one official knows what Esperanza is or does. They just talk about negative and have a policy to reject community-based organizations. They think we are trying to take from them; there is a serious mental breach. 3. Guadalupe needs more fuel; it is vital to this community. The Tejano Conjunto Festival is unique and must be developed and protected. 4. Green corridors/spaces are overlooked. Need bike paths to arts events. Need to join the environment and art and grow what we have.

Need a conversation is about how to create a market, not how to protect a culture. Speaking of the East and West sides, La Gloria (building that was demolished), San Pedro Springs. How we give back to our community. Not just about selling a painting, but how cultural roots can be maintained. Historical and cultural preservation of who we are. The Eastside has been devastated. Protect what is here so our children can enjoy and understand it. The Symphony educated me as a child about classical music. The plan must involve our children.

Need directory of artists and arts organizations so people know where to go for a resource.

Not from San Antonio. Dr. Richard Florida (keynote speaker at the Finding Ways Conference) made sense, but we need to raise the bar. Much is going on here, but it's mediocre and San Antonio is years behind. Need more internship programs, exchange programs, and diversity. Doesn't feel the diversity here.

If you're making \$50-60,000 San Antonio is a great place. It has big spaces to raise children, no competition, and racial tension.

Came to San Antonio from New York and wants to make a difference. For Black History month, wants to produce a play about Mohamed Ali. It is a spiritual journey. It had success in London and New York. San Antonio is a 2nd and 3rd tier city, but we can be no.1.\

Downtown Advisory Board. Are there plans to tie TCC to the city's master plan? She questioned why there is no mention of the arts on the Downtown Advisory Board. If we want to draw big companies, we need to have the arts infused in all the policies and glued to the master plan.

Theater arts/Non-equity theater/City-equity house. Need to heighten support for young theater groups. They are fighting the current. Arts partners at Dallas' cultural arts organizations collaborate with schools and the OCA. Toys are provided to schools. It is a nonprofit collaborative that organizes fundraising projects and gives check to schools.

Regarding economic development, arts addressed in the master plan and made sure it stayed in there. Little-known policy. If San Antonio were to be approached by another country for a donation, art must be accepted and placed in a prominent place. There is no public input and process to review this policy. Jerry explains that we will address this. Bongo Joe was never addressed or provided with a tribute. He used to play downtown and needs a tribute. I believe it is illegal to perform in downtown streets.

True that you get tickets for performing on downtown streets. Art should be in the master plan, and should be mandated to businesses that come here, such as in the form of a cultural impact fee. Education and art and culture; Brackenridge High School. There is a big disconnect between school districts and arts education programs that exists, which must be addressed with school boards, especially inner-city schools.

City Planner: Works with neighborhoods all over the city. Need art in every aspect. On sidewalks, at bus stops; it should surround us everywhere. Need art to enrich our entire life.

Teachers need to be teaching art in schools. Art has been removed from schools. Art needs to be in the schools, and not just in more affluent neighborhoods. Do more than just bring in an artist periodically

I was born in San Antonio and am the oldest in the room. I am very proud that our neighborhoods are beautiful. I am involved with art in the schools, the opera guild and the McNay. They have very successful programs with the schools. The problem is the state testing programs. The irony of arts in schools is that it has proven to raise test scores.

Teachers' roles are determined in Austin. We citizens know little about what happens in public education. We must get excited about art. First Friday gets 1000 people in the gallery and is an exciting opportunity, even if they don't buy the art.

Cultural Tourism HOT Tax was created to give back to communities that created that very tax base. We need to be very concerned about cultural tourism. We're giving our City away. One Percent for the Arts got voted down. We need to become a cultural destination and we can't look at arts as "heads in beds."

A YMCA representative states that we need to have art for art's sake.

The City's had some success with national collaborative efforts. Those relationships tend to not be as well tied together as they should be. Music is a central artistic expression (not just Symphony, but also St. Mary's Street corridor, which is not supported by City).

Regarding access to these meetings and how/where they are scheduled? Transportation issues? What happened to issue of Cultural Equity, which was brought up last time? (Padrón responds that Cultural Equity is being added as a ninth TCC focus area.) There is a bastardization of culture (as demonstrated in Market Square merchandise). It's cultural violence and greed, not cultural tourism.

Need to do more to protect the Spanish missions. Need to protect interests of parishioners who still worship there. Need to build cultural equity.

Locals need to be encouraged to enjoy downtown just as much as tourists. (Cites example of Cow Parade.) Try to enliven street life. public art, performances, such as Jackson Square.

Used to be that there were Riverwalk venues where musicians used to play (small clubs, etc.) But after HemisFair it stopped. There are City ordinances still on the books about the type of music that must be played at the Riverwalk venues. (TCC consultants to research and identify these ordinances). This attitude is dominated by outside interests. What venues do local artists/musicians have available to them?

Include neighborhood leaders in TCC, and Mayor's Leadership Roundtable.

Placement of public art is important. Creation of first local Heritage District in East Side.

Book purchase budget for school libraries is an important need.

Funding failures locally sets terrible precedent (i.e. Symphony, Smithsonian).

San Antonio is a tourist destination. Do new businesses also see it as arts destination? Need an Arts Welcoming Committee. We must also save and preserve our beautiful theatres.

Some successes: Regarding the Southwest School of Art & Craft, artists and people who care made it happen. We must grow up!

San Antonio built a \$300 million sports arena, but we need basic things like a walking path and more parks.

There could be a higher level of trust if you make it clear whom you've interviewed, and whom you're going to interview for TCC. Need to keep the process transparent. Who was selected for individual interviews and focus groups.

Interview Bryce Milligan and Wilford Stapp.

The process tension concerns me (art for art's sake; arts market potential). Importance of venues, collaborations, etc. Cites example of space that is being converted into performance space....it's a win-win situation. Owns company that is leading this effort.

I want to congratulate the City on the Deco District.

Marilyn Fey gives a rundown of the Symphony's activities next season. They are not cutting back on educational concerts

Artists Alliance in the 1970s developed a plan for rehabilitating the Municipal Auditorium. Put together a directory of artists in the city. What happened to it all? They also published a monthly newspaper and master calendar.

Example of the Houston Wortham Center. If Houston can do it, why can't San Antonio?

III. Written Comments

Participants who did not get a chance to voice their comments during the forum were asked to write them down. Below are the written comments verbatim.

An underlying thread I perceive in this group is a conflict between those who are attempting to make the city more insulated against tourism and development and those who are trying to DEVELOP a creative economy. Some in this meeting seem only interested in preserving the past. The past is terribly important to our FUTURE but we must look into the future. The emphasis on education in the arts is incredibly important. – Also as a professional Scenic Designer and a founding member of San Antonio Public Theater (our most recent attempt at an Equity Theater) I would be glad to discuss the future of theater in our city.

Cultural tourism has pushed locals out of downtown.

- Young people of color are targeted by police especially on weekends, ticketed or sent to Juvenile jails
- No parking and what's around is too expensive
- Restaurants cater to tourists and too expensive
- Street level is bare. What is around is also for tourists-no local shopping, theaters, and hang-out places.

With regard to resources, it would be extremely helpful as a non-profit supporting city-owned properties to be provided with an index of all opportunities to collaborate, partner and fund these projects (i.e. The Alameda Theater and the Museo Americano Smithsonian.) In learning about these possibilities Centro Alameda Inc. would be instrumental in "supporting" Public Art, Infrastructure/Ecosystem/Tourism/Education; economic development through diverse program of performances, exhibits, festivals, etc. Will you please help us with this change? We need to open by 5/05. In advance, thank you!

Arts Welcoming Committee: Have an apparatus to introduce the new corporations that move to San Antonio and the employees they bring to the arts venues and organizations in San Antonio. If you want to do something that tourists will enjoy, commission a local artist to construct a mosaic on that ugly green water tower on the riverwalk at the La Villita turn. It is the most prominent eyesore in the city.

Art should be included in everything in the physical environment—bridges, abutments, sidewalks, handrails, etc. It will provide work/training for artists and craftsmen and provide an environment that stimulates the souls of everyone who lives here. On the tourist discussion—IF the city is quality for its residents first it will automatically attract tourists.

Tourism should be encouraged. Great cities have many tourists. Business alliance Cultural organizations should introduce the resources of its city. This has been a great opportunity to hear from a lot of concerned people. Emphasize collaboration among arts groups.

Officially recognize SA as both place and cultural geographical center of Mexican-Americans. Not to the exclusion of other cultures but the city has a complex about Mexican-Americans, ignoring the history. Similar to the recognition of New Orleans as a French and Jazz center; Boston as an Irish town or Miami as a Cuban city; San Francisco as a gay city.

More emphasis on neighborhood history. Sites of significant neighborhood history.

E. Reyna, Midtown on Blanco, Beacon Hill Area Neighborhood Association. We would like to get back something that we lost. Our kids made six murals and the process was documented. Ex-taggers were the teachers. The idea was to get rid of the graffiti. (A yearly program to continue) Our murals were to be placed in front of our businesses, they are now in STORAGE. We would like an Art Gallery/Civic Center for dance music, etc. We have Green Space, (our “Linear Park” could have a civic center/Art Gallery.) Linear Park-skate board, a dog park, gazebo, a botanical garden for kids to have a garden in the community—Was to come

Monetary Inequity—The “Major Arts Groups” receive the lion’s share of the monies available for funding. They are the groups that are most capable of funding their entire budget on their own. The grassroots arts groups do not have the same ability to raise the large amounts of monies that the Majors can. The grassroots groups need more help.

M. DeKing-Retired Art Teacher (Public Schools) and working artist, resident of the Granada Homes (formerly Plaza Hotel-art deco building). Has 250 residents over 62. Recently coordinated an art show with three other artists—amazed everyone—showed 20 artists, terrific space. It pointed out the dearth of such events for our older citizens. They were delighted to have over four hundred visitors to their building and “real artists” in the two day run.

Cultural Equity—currently, the rich organizations get the most

Justice—a clean process for determining funding

Excellence—let artists’ standards be raised

Interview Claude Stanush re: Long term ideas for arts- organized the Artists Alliance back in late ‘70’s. Is a writer, and wrote a column for Express-News for 10 years.

Finding out about arts and culture in a fragmented way

- Is not driven by people in service to money-making—we stay here because the community gives us something Houston, Austin, Dallas cannot.

- If we feed the cultural and creative climate to create a visible critical mass—this is what we should work on
- We need to get organized and look like we are all on the same page. Relationship building among the arts and cultural groups is essential.